1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



vestiture was over, the *ebamei* crowded on to the *obu* platform at the end of the village on which were already strewn heaps of high-smelling pig flesh. It was by now growing dusk, but there was still enough daylight for them to make a brilliant patch of colour against the dark background of forest trees. The reason for this move on the part of the *ebamei* was said variously to be (1) that all the people should see them, (2) that they should see all the people, and (3) that they should see all the pig meat.

During the whole of this time the *ebamei* have had to support the weight of their *kokumbari* feathers and ornaments, to which has now in most cases been added that of their *otob*[illegible] and they have neither drunk water, nor, except for banana and sugar-cane, broken their fast since morning. These ordeals, however, must continue throughout the night, which is occupied with singing and dancing and with the *ai sumbasiona*, or abusing of the women. This latter consists of highly obscene choruses and action songs, to which the women respond in kind and with no lack of spirit. It may be that under the circumstances morality is loosened. I quote a sentence of Chinnery and Beaver's: 'In ordinary circumstances an initiation is a time of somewhat general licence, promiscuous intercourse being permitted between any initiated man and woman.'[1] Witnesses have assured me that such promiscuity is confined to the initiation ceremonies. The initiates bear no part in it, but between their elders it is unrestricted. No husband might object if another man made free with his wife, for, it was said, he would fear retaliation by sorcery if he interfered. Needless to say I have no more than verbal evidence for this licence, but there is little doubt that at these times it does occur.

Next morning the *ebamei* are subjected to a rite called *ate-ate*, which appears to mean literally 'demonstration'. Once more they sit in a row on the logs, each with a man behind him armed with a stout stick. In front of the initiates stand their respective mothers holding a taro in the left hand, and the sharp peeler of oyster or coco-nut shell

[1] *Loc. cit.*, p. 77.

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



called *kari* in the right. When all is in readiness the women deftly slice off a piece of the taro, and with one motion send the fragment and the peeler across the head of the initiate to fall at the feet of the man waiting behind. The latter immediately smashes the peeler with his stick. This, I am informed, is a formal way of ending the tabu on the mother's cooking. Formerly, it appears, the cooking for the *ehamei* has not been done by his mother but by his *tata*;[1] henceforward after this rite his mother may cook for him without risk of any kind. It is said that this rite is once more a safeguard against baldness, the idea of which an Orokaiva so heartily hates. In other parts there is the custom of breaking a coco-nut above the initiate's head and allowing the fluid to fall over him; and for this the same reason (somewhat often called into service) is given, viz. that of preventing baldness.

But the partial fast of the initiates does not come to an end with the performance of this *ate-ate* ceremony. They are merely allowed to remove the heavier of their ornaments, a relief for which they must be heartily grateful. They continue to eat nothing more than banana and sugar-cane, and are still denied water until on the following day they eat the *suna*.

By this time all the guests have dispersed, carrying with them their presents of food, and the village is left very untidy indeed after the feasting, but in comparative quiet. The eating of the *suna* is a rite which pertains only to the initiates and their fellow villagers. The *suna* itself is a stew, a highly composite dish of which the ingredients seem to vary in different tribes. At Divina Kovari they were taro, pig flesh, *Tauga* nuts (*Terminalia Okari*), the fruit of the tree *Puga*, *Ina* (a kind of *andropogon*), and the leaves of the trees *Ega*, *Houra*, and *Sigoga*, and of the croton *simbiri*. The whole is stewed with the addition of coco-nut oil and pig's blood. I have been unable to discover any magical significance in any of these ingredients: except for the leaves, they are all

[1] Though other informants have said that the mother does cook for her own son while secluded. The matter is evidently of no great consequence, and the prohibition of the mother's cooking is not universal.

3: Reay : E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



headdresses. At the conclusion of the initiation, some of the initiates are presented with the *otohu* ornaments. (Formerly, it was always a distinguished warrior who presented these.) The initiates then fast for a day and a night. That night, there is sexual licence for the senior villagers, a temporary lifting of tabus on incest and adultery, but the initiates themselves are not permitted to participate.

In interpreting the initiation ceremonies of the Orokaiva, Chinnery and Beaver state that "the idea . . . seems to be to instil absolute and lasting terror into the candidates, and to make them think that their elders have beaten off the spirits; while in this receptive and chastened frame of mind, the lads, imbued with the idea of the power of the men, will pay attention to the instruction given. There appears to be an idea that the spirits of the dead are present, and that the initiated, *i.e.* the living, are keeping them away from the candidates."[6]

Amongst the living, the initiation ritual juxtaposes the two groups, initiated and uninitiated, the one group terrified and utterly helpless, and the other well able to deal with the *embahi* spirits and drive away danger. Thus the respect for seniority, which is informally learned during childhood, is finally established.

An Erikson-type psychoanalytic interpretation would doubtless find in the *embahi's* threat to devour the boys, with the menacing reiteration "Bite, bite, bite!" a dramatization of the *meni orosati's* guilt at biting the mother. I have not enough data to confirm or deny the admissibility of such an interpretation.

Above all, initiation involves the explicit instruction of the boys in the *otohu* virtues. This instruction takes place during their period of seclusion in the *oro*. Later, when *otohu* ornaments are given to some of them, they are again exhorted in detail to practise these virtues. The possession of an *otohu* imposes a social obligation on the wearer to "live up to it," and the prestige associated with this ornament indubitably ensures that a large number of people do in fact approximate to the ideal *otohu* patterns of behaviour.

### (3) Sanctions

In Orokaiva society, sanctions operate diffusely and need no specific person's direction to put them into effect. The *embo kiti*, whom F. E. Williams called a "clan headman," but who is really more of a village headman whose position is hereditary within a certain lineage of the clan, has a limited authority which is backed by no sanctions. He has no power to reward or punish, except by making obvious his approval or disapproval of various lines of action. In fact, there is no rewarding and punishing authority at all.

Retaliation seems to have been the commonest sanction in former times, in the form of direct violence or the more subtle method of sorcery.[7] Retaliation by sorcery may still be practised; I have no information on this point. Certainly deaths are still attributed to sorcery. When (during 1950) several people from the same village

[6] E. W. P. Chinnery and W. N. Beaver, in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. XLV, 1915.

[7] F. E. Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, pp. 327–329.